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ABSTRACT

The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program at Rota High School in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, which includes over half of the school's students, develops teamwork and helps students excel in academics. Students are instilled with discipline, motivation, pride, and a sense of integrity, trust, and belonging. The JROTC curriculum has high expectations, building character and citizenship through its emphasis on academic performance and leadership. The program fosters appreciation of ethical values and principles and stresses the importance of high school graduation for future success. The curriculum features modules, with task conditions and standards for each module. Most of the program involves hands-on learning and application, and many JROTC learning activities are planned and executed by the cadets themselves. There is regular assessment of student progress. Parental involvement and community service are integral to the program, with parents donating time, labor, equipment, and food. Cadets provide clean-up services and traffic control to the island. The program integrates academic subjects with counseling and guidance, providing a family environment. The whole-person approach is one of the program's unique aspects. (SM)



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# JROTC PROGRAM EARNING DISTINCTION IN COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

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by

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EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS IN THE PACIFIC

Volume 4, Number 2 | PACIFIC RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING | May 1997

# JROTC Program Earning Distinction in Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

*By Stan Koki**

Rapidly gaining exemplary status in the Public School System in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program. A relatively recent arrival on the Public School System scene, the JROTC program has rapidly grown into one of the most popular and appreciated programs in the CNMI's educational system. Enrollment in the program has grown from 123 in School Year 1991-92 to 412 for the current school year.

On January 31, 1997, Commissioner William S. Torres met with all of the CNMI's JROTC instructors. Commissioner Torres told the group that he noticed how the JROTC program has helped students to develop positively in a learning environment of structure and support—one in which students actively direct program activities, and develop discipline and a sense of pride and responsibility. "The focus is not just on the mind of the student, but on the whole individual" he asserted.

*Veteran's Day Parade, November 11, 1996*

CNMI JROTC Program Manager, Captain Ernest R. Torres (retired), believes that a major strength of the program is that it develops strong teamwork. This effort includes assisting students to excel in their academic subjects. Students who are struggling with their academic schoolwork are given ready assistance from either an instructor or a student who is doing well in the subject. Captain Torres indicates that the program's main goal is instilling in students disci-

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pline, motivation and pride, along with a sense of integrity, trust and belonging. In the classroom, the emphasis is completely on creating a positive program environment that fosters students' academic achievement, ability to assume responsibility, and development of leadership skills.

This PREL publication takes an in-depth look at one of the JROTC programs in the CNMI—the Rota High School Buck Battalion. The intent is to disseminate information on successful practices or elements in this specific program so that they can be adapted for use by other programs striving for excellence in the Pacific region.

### Rota High School JROTC Program

The Rota High School JROTC Buck Battalion was first implemented in 1993-94 with one instructor and an enrollment of 25 cadets. The program now has two instructors and an enrollment of 95 students out of 167 students on the Rota High School campus. The percentage of enrollment is 56.7 percent, an unusually high number in JROTC enrollment in the Pacific region and nation. Presently, the Rota High School Buck Battalion is estimated to be one of the top five enrollment out of 867 schools in the 1st Brigade, which includes the CNMI and other geographic entities. The instructors are Sergeant Major Atalig and First Sergeant Castro.

On November 22, 1996, the Rota High School Buck Battalion completed its First Annual Formal Inspection by Sergeant General Major Patrick Lee from the 1st Brigade of the Cadet Command Headquarters. Sergeant General Major Lee conducted one part of a two-part detailed formal inspection.

*Principal with colorguard, Education Day, November 21, 1996*

The areas inspected included cadet records for adequacy of training, promotions, and awards; supply records and accountability of equipment; cadet briefing; in-ranks inspection for uniformity and general knowledge of the JROTC curriculum; drill performance based on execution and precision of drill movements; and cadet interview.

The maximum points given for this part of the inspection is 600. The Buck Battalion accumulated 584 points, causing Sergeant General Major Lee to state unofficially that the Rota High School Buck Battalion may well have the highest rating for these inspections in all the 54 schools he has inspected. With such a high rating, the Buck Battalion is a potential candidate for the prestigious award, "Honor Unit with Distinction."

### High Expectations

Among the correlates of effective schools is high expectations. The Rota High School JROTC curriculum expects much of its cadets. Developed by the United States Army, the JROTC curriculum focuses on building strong character and citizenship in high school students through an emphasis on academic performance and leadership. It rigorously prepares cadets for responsible leadership roles while making them aware of their rights, responsibilities, and privileges as citizens of the United States. It also fosters an appreciation of ethical values and principles that include responsibility, citizenship, integrity, and respect for constituted authority. The citizenship component of the program provides an effective training ground for young adults willing to grow up to become responsible and contributing citizens, as well as future leaders in the civilian and military sectors.

The importance of a high school diploma for a successful future is stressed. Goal setting, visualization techniques, and positive self-talk are instructional strategies frequently used with the cadets. The cadets learn life skills, such as how to be independent, make individual decisions, and work effectively with little or no supervision. The curriculum heightens awareness of the dangers and effects of substance abuse, and promotes ways to resist pressure as well as ways to assist others in resisting pressure to use and abuse substances.

### Effective Instruction

The Program of Instruction (POI) is organized by modules, with task conditions and standards for each module. Eighty percent of the program deals with hands-on training and application.

Many of the JROTC learning activities are planned and executed by the cadets themselves, with minimal supervision by instructors, who are expected to "lead by example because we don't tolerate double standards," states Captain Torres.

Cadets learn lessons well, because many of them are student-driven and hands-on or experiential learning. Among the many cadet-directed activities are outdoor encampments, physical training exercises, drill and formation exercises, fund-raising activities, and the annual formal Military Ball. At Rota High School, a variety of enrichment activities during lunch, after school, on weekends, during intersessions, and during summer vacation are provided to cadets.

The Rota High School JROTC program seriously attempts to accommodate the needs and interests of students with varying ability levels and learning styles. All students have numerous opportunities to master skills. Those with identified areas of weakness are assisted by cadets who serve as peer tutors.

### Assessment of Student Progress

Closely aligned to instruction is regular assessment of student progress. Students are assessed through an evaluation of their progress, based on clearly delineated standards. Assessment of student progress is supportive of curriculum and instruction in this standards-based approach to education. The assessments are frequently documented on videotape so that the cadets can receive immediate feedback and do self-assessment of their work and progress.

### Home/School Relations

Integral to the JROTC program is parental involvement and community service. Parents generously donate time, food, labor, equipment and other forms of support to the program. Cadets provide clean-up and traffic control services to the island, and their services are frequently requested at fiestas, weddings, local and holiday celebrations, and funerals. The home/school/community equation is nicely balanced in the Rota High School JROTC program.

An outstanding example of this equation was the First Annual Veterans' Day celebration on Rota on November 11, 1996, with the theme, "Honoring Those Who Served."

Cadets were selected to escort incoming guests, which included Governor Froilan Tenorio and veterans from Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. The cadets carried out their mission well despite the heavy rains and gusty winds that rampaged over the island. During the parade, which featured numerous floats organized by the community, the JROTC formation was one of the highlights among the others in the parade, which started at Tete'to Beach and ended at the Veterans' Memorial Park in Sontun Beach, where the festivities were to culminate with food, music, speeches and other events. "We should always have Veterans' Day here in Rota," remarked Governor Tenorio to the crowd in acknowledgment of the community's strong support.

### School Mission/Culture

"The Rota High School JROTC program is a school-within-a-school on campus," explains Principal Jesus A. Songsong. "Academic subjects are integrated, along with counseling and guidance. The program is like a family to the cadets."

*Veterans' Day Parade, November 11, 1996*

This family orientation is quite evident to anyone who visits the program. The classroom environment demonstrates a caring and nurturing climate that is conducive to learning. Cadets frequently request to gather at the "JROTC home" after they have fulfilled their daily expectations in other classes. The refrigerator and microwave oven are at their disposal to store and heat food brought from home. "In this program, everybody is a family," says Cadet Jamie Santos. "We learn that there is always someone to help you whenever you need it," says Christie Quitugua.

The principal is convinced that the whole person approach, which is part of family living, is a very visible and unique aspect of Rota High School's JROTC program. "The goal is 100 percent student enrollment in this program," he adds.

A member of the math department comments, "The JROTC program provides a sense of structure, purpose and direction that our kids on Rota really need today. That's why they are gravitating to the program. It does incredible things for the kids!"

Cadet Ramona Mendiola strongly concurs. "This program really taught me discipline. It taught me how to respect others and to be a good leader. I love this program because we all work as a team to become our very best. This program has been keeping me busy and motivated. All I can say is, I love it. It's the best program I have ever entered."

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